ON

Capt. Parkhill[illegible]mpany,

"THE HOWELL GUARDS,"

On the Eve of their Departure for the Seat of War,

AUGUST 26, 1861.

By Rev. John E. DuBose, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Tallahassee, Florida.

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SERMON.

"Fear not nor be dismayed: be strong and of good courage; for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight." JOSHUA X: 25.

After a brilliant victory just then achieved, and whilst yet other conflicts awaited them, Joshua, the illustrious leader of the grand army of Israel, thus addressed his soldiers: It was a memorable period in their history. The time had arrived, according to the purpose of the Sovereign Disposer of events, when His people should be masters in their own land—when a nation, long oppressed and down-trodden, should shake off their fetters and rise to that commanding position to which they were entitled. But such a transition is not to be effected without difficulty and trials—without struggling, peril, and without great suffering. Though the same Omnipotent arm that divided the waters of the Great Sea, passing Israel safely through, and burying proud Pharaoh beneath the returning waves, was still to be stretched forth in their defence; and though every difficulty in their way could have been removed by His word, yet, God adopts a plan more ennobling to man, and not less certain in its results. Using His creatures as instrumentalities, He causes their own arms to achieve their victories and secure their independence. The ordeal to which the Israelites were subjected in establishing their nationality, was severe and trying. Through adversity they learned righteousness, and by a tardy, protracted and perilous pilgrimage in the desert, they were inured to hardship; and now on reaching their long expected inheritance, they had yet to develop the latent germ of manliness which oppression had crushed. This fruitful land, ere it became the

home of a mighty nation, had to receive a baptism of blood drawn in the contest, as an offering on the altar of liberty. It seems ordained that so rich and precious a boon cannot be obtained without a priceless offering.

The tragic horrors that attended this conquest, are melancholy to contemplate. Entire families were exterminated—cities were destroyed and lands laid waste—kingdoms were overthrown, and Kings perished in the general slaughter.—In this scene, at which the heart grows sick, we behold the people of the Lord engaged. They were accomplishing the double purpose of achieving their own independence, and of administering retributive justice to *their* enemies and the Lord's. The cup of their iniquity being full, He cuts them down by the hand of his people.

Under other circumstances, such havoc as was made by Joshua's army, would have been flagrantly wicked, but occuring as it did, however revolting to our sensibilities, it was free from the stain of guilt. Had it proceeded from mercenary motives or a spirit of revenge, it would justly be regarded wicked and diabolical; but since no such motive characterized this contest on their part, their conduct is not rightly subject to this imputation.

In the ordinary dispensations of Divine Providence, we perceive repeated instances of a nation affecting its destruction by the corrupt administration of its affairs.

The insolent and contemptuous disregard of the Divine commands contained in His Holy Word, and of chartered rights—unholy invasions of the rights and privileges of associate States—infidelity, licentiousness and cupidity have produced, as they ever will produce, disaster in proportion to their extent. For such sins the Almighty will withdraw His sustaining power, and leave a guilty nation to reap the legitimate consequences, whether it be instability, decline or downfall. The History of the World is a record of this fact. But to no nation can we point as a more striking illustration, than the one from which we but recently with-

drew. She stood forth lately in her glory, the wonder and admiration of the world; but the seeds of infidelity being sown in the genial soil of New England, where cupidity has long been the reigning sin, they sprang up and brought forth fruit after their kind, even an hundred fold. The church, which is a nation's safeguard, partook of this poison, and became delirious. Under her maniacal hallucination she mistook her mission. Conjoining the office of the humble ambassador of the cross with the corrupt politician, the lines between their separate functions were obliterated, and from this illicit and most unholy association, have mainly sprung the errors and wrongs that are now being harvested in the horrors of war. The Lord seems to have given them up, that with their own hands they might hew out their [illegible] sepulchres. Forgetting those cardinal principles of government for which we once together fought Great Britain.—Yea, forgetting even religion and humanity, they have insulted, oppressed and trodden down their own brethren, until self-respect and self-preservation, imperatively demanded a separation from them. Whether this was *our right* or not, it was a *necessity*, and rendered such by that intolerance characteristic of fanaticism. And even now, though the Lord by His Providence has frowned on all their undertakings, the blood of their murdered brethren crying up from the ground against them, they still rush forward in the work of destruction, regardless alike of the dictates of reason or the obligations of religion. To repel such an enemy as this, is not alone self-preservation, but an act of duty.

When legislation, remonstrance and entreaty have all been tried and failed, forbearance ceases to be a virtue.—Exhausted argument must give way until the sword can restore reason. Under these circumstances, the sin that is incurred from the destruction of life, and the consequent sorrow and suffering, must lie at the door of those who cause it and not on those who, in the act of self-protection, become

their destroyers. Human life ought ever to be held sacred, even by the soldier who is educated and trained for mortal combat with his fellow man. The design of his vocation is really *preservation* and not *destruction*. Circumstances may render it necessary for him to shed much blood and to be the agent in producing much suffering, yet he be guiltless before God. The case of Joshua is an instance in point. He was one of the most eminent Saints of olden times, and would have shrunk with holy horror from the deeds he performed, had he not been shielded with the consciousness of his own rectitude. Feeling assured that he was executing the purpose of God, the duty however disagreeable, was performed with unflinching firmness. It was under this conviction that he exhorted his soldiers to be fearless and undismayed in the discharge of this, as in any other duty, which the Lord commanded. They obeyed their resolute leader, trusting in the word of the Lord, and soon their foes were vanquished, and they, in quiet possession of their land, could rejoice in what they had accomplished, and under their own vines and fig-trees, send up their grateful praise to Him who gave them the victory.

As we are called on the present occasion to address this gallant band of soldiers who have buckled on their armor to defend their country, and to-morrow march for the seat of war, we commend to them the example and the exhortation of Israel's pious leader: "*Fear not nor be dismayed: be strong and of good courage; for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.*"

This brief but comprehensive injunction, teaches us THE SPIRIT WITH WHICH THE SOLDIER SHOULD GO FORTH TO BATTLE, and THE GROUNDS ON WHICH HE MAY HOPE FOR SUCCESS.

The first requisite for a reliable soldier is, *true moral courage*. The battle-field is no place for a timid man. If called to endure such fierce conflicts as our armies have already passed through, true courage will be needed to stand the test. That kind of courage which rises from a sense of

duty, is best adapted to such an emergency as the present. Physical courage, though more imposing, and often more effective, while it can endure, may give way when most needed. Excited passion, though destructive for a time, may waste its fury and subside; but the soldier whose mind rises to the magnitude of the undertaking, in whose breast the fire of patriotism burns—who, seeing the danger of the field, shrinks not from it because duty forbids it. On him we can rely. He has looked at consequences and determined to meet them. Such men command victory. But on this point I need not address you, since facts prove that on our side we are not wanting in this respect. The enemy themselves are competent witnesses in the engagements which have already taken place. Truer soldiers have never stood on any field than those who have marched from Southern soil.

But more is needed in a soldier than courage; there are trials and privations of no ordinary kind to be encountered. There is reason for the exhortation, "be not dismayed, but be strong and of good courage."

Strength of purpose, as well as strength of body, is required for the camp. Many a brave man, unaccustomed to the hardships of camp-life, has become disheartened and spiritless, from hard fare and exhausting labor. Enlisting, perhaps under excitement, and without counting the cost, he was unprepared for the trials that awaited him, and gave way under them. Of such a one, however brave, we are constrained to say he is not truly a soldier, and would never do to drive a tyrant back or lift his iron heel from a country's neck. In a time like this we need only men—self-sacrificing men, who can bear hardships as good soldiers—who are willing to spend and be spent in the service of their country. It is not a pleasure excursion they are to go upon, but a season of toil such as men, ordinarily, but once in a life-time endure, and such as few men would endure, except to save their country; but a mind prepared for its trials,

has nearly endured them. We have, therefore, only to adopt with the mind such a course of preparation as we prescribe for the body, and if there is moral stamina to operate upon, it will rise equal to the emergency. Cheerfully can we bid adieu to home and friends, and wear out strength and life on the tented field. May a kind Providence, dear friends, spare you the sore trials your brethren in arms have had to undergo; but should it be your lot to become their partners in suffering, may you receive from on high, strength equal to your duty.

There is yet one thing requisite in a soldier, and it is the highest qualification, which is, *a soul at peace with God, and a heart resigned and determined to do and suffer His will.*

One of the great beauties of religion is, that it is adapted to all stations and conditions in life. It adorns the palace of a King, and is at home in the rude hut where poverty dwells; it is the maiden's ornament and the soldier's shield. The soldier who is at peace with God and is resigned to His will, has nothing to fear, either in time or eternity. The Lord stands pledged to be his shield and to make all things work together for his good. In the hour of battle he has God to lean upon. He feels assured that the eye which watches the sparrow will be on him; and though the missiles of death fly thick around him, they can never reach him until God permits it, for the number of his days are with Him. There is, therefore, in the breast of the consistent christian, a sense of security which admirably prepares him for the field of battle. The bravest men are those who appreciate danger, yet never shrink from it. In this appears the superiority of the christian soldier. The infidel is brave as long as he can keep his eyes closed to danger and to future responsibility—hence, he reflects but little on consequences; but the christian, though fully awake to these terrible realities, can still be calm while standing on the brink of eternity.

Shakspeare, speaking of the uncertainty and dread of the

future state, very truly says that, "conscience makes cowards of us all." Many a brave man who has trembled in the hour of peril would have stood firm, had all been quiet within. His fellow man he could face with a steady nerve; but who can stand before God when the soul is not at peace with Him. Some have done so, it is true; but it has been by shutting out God and eternity from the mind. They were *blind* enough to rush into the very jaws of death, but not *brave* enough to open their eyes and look before them.—We praise the deed, but pity the man. An understanding properly enlightened, will readily perceive that this is but the counterfeit of true courage, and is dependent on depravity to give it circulation. Then, soldiers, let me exhort you to be brave enough to bend the knee to God, and humbly seek peace and reconciliation with Him.

It was a sublime spectacle to behold in our late engagement, a regiment of brave Carolinians, just as they were about to enter the contest, first bowing down before the Almighty, while their chaplain offered prayer in their behalf. And it is worthy of note, that this regiment was most wonderfully preserved. Though in the heat of the battle, (if my memory serves me) but three were killed.

There are two things to be observed concerning this war, which we ask the men of this world seriously to consider.—In the first place, history furnishes no instance of as many praying soldiers on the field; and in the second place, we have never heard under like circumstances, of such remarkable preservation of life. Let scoffers and infidels argue as they may, these two facts will ever stand out in history, as a happy illustration of the efficacy of prayer; and brave Generals will doubtless learn the real value of piety in the camp.

Now, the ground on which we may hope for success, lies FIRST in the fact *that we are in the path of duty.* This is always the path of safety and victory. "Duty is ours; consequences belong to God." With a lawless enemy invading

our soil, destroying property and life, and assailing virtue itself, it is christian duty to take the field and drive back this foe of God and man. It is a duty we owe to ourselves, our families, our country and our Lord, to throw ourselves before such an enemy, and brave death itself, rather than leave him one foot of land on which to rest his polluted feet. There is no choice in this matter but tame submission to corruption and degradation, or manly resistance even to utter extermination. Between the two a christian patriot ought not long to hesitate. Every inch of ground he yields is a contribution to vice and immorality.

This war upon unoffending freemen, has been characterized by deeds, the darkest and most diabolical that have ever been recorded against a civilized nation; and to permit such aggressions to pass unrebuked, would be to undo the labor of a century, to pour contempt on the blood of our revolutionary sires, and to open the flood-gates of tyranny and infidelity, so that our once happy land which has been the asylum of the oppressed, shall be so inundated with error as to become only the freeman's prison and the home of the slave. Who pauses, then, to ask where duty lies? Let a mighty voice from the graves of our fathers sound in thunder tones—to arms! Do as did our sires—boldly meet a tyrant and demand what God has given you. *This is duty.* Let us discharge it, and our afflicted land will again rear her lofty head among the nations of the earth. Our hills and plains will echo the joy of glad hearts, and from the temples of the Living God, will be heard anthems of praise unto Him who delivered us from the hands of our enemies.

Our hope of success further lies in this, *that God himself will defend the right.* So much has been said and written on the correctness of our position, I should be but repeating one oft-told tale to argue this point.—It is enough to say (what facts prove) that those who are opposing us began in radical error, and have never

in their progress departed from it. The first and last bud of opposition to us, is found on the stem of *infidelity*, the mother of abolitionism. Every step that has been taken in this aggression has been in the face of God's revealed word. It is a significant fact, to be ment'oned here as evidence in point, that there is not a single branch of the christian church connected on both sides of Mason & Dixon's line, but what on the enemies' side, they have departed from their own church polity or doctrine. Now, if any of us were right twenty years ago, the people of the North are wrong now, for they *now* oppose what *then* they subscribed to. If, therefore, we concede the side of truth to them, our churches were all established on wrong principles—just what infidelity asserts, and would rejoice to prove. While such has been the course of the church North, the South, in all the different branches of the church, has continued to follow the path marked out in the word of God and the denominational standards. This, then, is an important link in the chain of evidence in favor of truth on our side. And as we turn from this to examine into our civil affairs, we discover like testimony here. What once *they fought* to *establish* they now fight to destroy. We once fought for the right of self-government—*they now fight againtst* it. We once framed what we considered a wise constitution, securing to all sections their rights, and made that the bond of our Union as States. They proved false to it, as they themselves have admitted, while we stood true to our compact, and have to this day preserved the constitution unsullied. Under this constitution, both our government and our churches have prospered. God has blest us all abundantly, while in good faith to each other, we were true to the principles we set out on; and never did He cease to smile on the labor of our hands until they departed from this line of policy.—With these facts before us, what is the legitimate conclusion as to where lies the right? Wherever this may be, there will be the Lord to defend it. If the facts alluded to are

worth anything at all, they show that we are on the safe side—the side of truth. We have nothing, therefore, to fear, for God will not suffer truth to be overcome. It may be subjected to a severe trial, but like gold, it will come out of the crucible to shine more brightly. On such a foundation you may well build your hopes. The most powerful armies cannot contend against Him whom the winds and the waves obey. In Him, therefore, calmly repose your trust, and go forth fearlessly and undismayed to the defense of your country. But while we have thus maintained the righteousness of our cause and encouraged you to believe that the Lord will be with you, I cannot forget that it is a solemn duty you are called to perform, in the discharge of which you may at any moment be suddenly hurried into the presence of your God. Let me, therefore, as a faithful minister, warn you against an error which I fear may be too common among soldiers, that is, basing their hope of eternal salvation, in case they fall, simply on the ground of their falling in a righteous cause. Do not, I beseech you, suffer any such idea to get possession of your mind. It involves a total misconception of God's plan of salvation.—It is a false hope that will certainly fail you when it comes to be tested. "Ye must be born again." The name of Jesus Christ is the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Your peace must be made with God, through Him. All the noble deeds that you perform, which will certainly gain for you your country's praise, will avail you nothing in the matter of your salvation, without having faith in Christ. Your first duty is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to surrender your heart to him. Nothing you can do will make amends for the neglect of this, and nothing but this will afford you any ground to hope for a blissful immortality above.

In conclusion, allow me to assure you, brave soldiers, that you carry with you the earnest prayers and sympathies of all you leave behind. You have nobly stepped forward to vin-

dicate the honor of your country—to purchase for us all, if need be, with your blood, the richest earthly inheritance enjoyed by man. We owe you a debt of gratitude which requires more than a life time to pay. All we have is now at stake ; and to you and your fellow soldiers, we are looking to secure by your valor, our dear rights. Our interest and yours are the same. It is your homes and firesides you go to protect. Wives, mothers and sisters, are now looking to you to defend them against a merciless enemy.

Soldiers, you can afford to brave dangers and endure hardships. The eyes of all you love are turned to you for protection, and we feel that we can say for you, they will not look in vain. We fear not to confide so sacred a trust in the hands of our Southern sons. It is not the spirit of a Southern band to flinch in the hour of need. Go then, brave soldiers, to the field, and from the sanctuary and the family altar, will our prayers go up, daily for you. To a covenant keeping God we commend you, and pray that with priceless laurels you may soon return to enjoy with us the freedom your arms have secured.

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